

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

Claims 1-16 (canceled).

Claim 17 (currently amended): A microorganism culturing apparatus comprising:
a microorganism;
a culturing solution for culturing the microorganism;
a container arranged to hold the culturing solution; and
a support arranged to support and hold the container; wherein
the container takes on and maintains a predetermined shape ~~by being supported~~
defined by the support such that the container repeatedly occupies an identical space
within the support.

Claim 18 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the support includes a bottom member defining a bottom surface and side plates defining side surfaces, the side plates and the container having transparent portions, respectively, and the transparent portions of the side plates and the transparent portions of the container overlap each other.

Claim 19 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 18, wherein the side plates are made of flat plates and at least one set of paired flat plates oppose each other.

Claim 20 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the support includes side plates defining side surfaces and a framework arranged to support the side plates, and end portions of the side plates have attachment portions that are arranged to engage with the framework and that are removably fixed to the

framework.

Claim 21 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 20, further comprising posts disposed upright with both ends thereof fixed to the framework, and pressing members that are disposed outside of and substantially parallel to the posts, wherein the side plates are squeezed between the pressing members and the posts, and the pressing members are fixed to the posts.

Claim 22 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 21, wherein the side plates are flat plates disposed end to end in a longitudinal direction of the framework, the flat plates are interconnected through the posts end to end in the longitudinal direction of the framework, with two adjacent ends of the flat plates fixed to one post with one pressing member.

Claim 23 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, further comprising a gas introduction tube arranged to introduce gas into the culturing solution, the gas introduction tube is provided in the container.

Claim 24 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 20, wherein the side plates are supported for rotation about bottom ends in a state of fixation between the attachment portions and the framework being released.

Claim 25 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 24, further comprising wires, wherein the ends of the side plates on the upper portion side of the framework are connected through the wires to the upper portions of the framework.

Claim 26 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 24, further comprising a stopper that is provided at a bottom portion of the framework to restrict the rotation range of the side plates.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The microorganism culturing apparatus of Claim 20, wherein the framework and the sides plates are movable relative to each other in a state of the fixation between the attachment portions and the framework being released, and the relative motion produces a clearance between the upper portion of the framework and the ends of the side plates on the upper portion side of the framework.

Claims 28 and 29 (canceled).

Claim 30 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the container includes therein a gas introduction tube having minute holes along an entire cross-section of a substantially circular circumference thereof and a gas supply tube arranged to supply gas to the gas introduction tube, and the container further includes an opening at only one position for putting in the microorganism and the culturing solution, with one end of the gas supply tube connected to the gas introduction tube and with the other end of the gas supply tube extending out through the opening.

Claim 31 (previously presented): The culturing apparatus of Claim 30, wherein the container is a substantially rectangular bag having longer sides and shorter sides, the opening is provided at one end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag, the gas introduction tube is disposed at the other end portion of the shorter side of the substantially rectangular bag along the longer side of the substantially rectangular bag, and shaft passage members arranged to allow a shaft to pass through are provided along the longer side on the side on which the opening is provided.

Claims 32-36 (canceled).

Claim 37 (new): The culturing apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the support includes a framework, a plurality of the containers, a first plurality of side plates disposed end to end in a longitudinal direction of the framework, and a second plurality of side plates disposed end to end in the longitudinal direction and parallel to the first plurality of side plates, wherein the plurality of the containers are arranged between the first plurality of side plates and the second plurality of side plates, respectively, and the culturing apparatus contains no other side plates other than the first plurality of side plates and the second plurality of side plates.